

REMARKS

The Office Action dated May 18, 2005, has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in response thereto. Claims 1-17 are pending in the application.

The rejection of claims 1, 6, 11, and 13 as being indefinite under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, is respectfully traversed. These claims have been amended to remove certain instances of the word “or”. Each claim is definite and is in conformance with 35 USC 112. Therefore, the rejection should be withdrawn.

The rejection of claims 1-5, 11, and 12 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over McGregor in view of Romesburg is respectfully traversed. Independent claims 1 and 11 each recite a user interface comprising a first interface section and a second interface section. In claim 1, the first interface section includes a first control for selectively connecting a first microphone to a selected one of second and third loudspeakers and a second control for selectively connecting a first loudspeaker to a selected one of second and third microphones. The second interface section includes a third control for selectively connecting a second microphone to a selected one of first and third loudspeakers and a fourth control for selectively connecting the second loudspeaker to a selected one of first and third microphones. Claim 1 recites a third interface section with similarly connected controls, and claim 11 does not recite a third section.

By virtue of the recited controls, a connection between each microphone and any one of the loudspeakers can be controlled from at least two interface sections. For example, the connection between the first microphone (at the first seat location) and the second loudspeaker (at the second seat location) can be controlled by either the first control (at the first seat location) or the fourth control (at the second seat location). As a consequence, each channel from any particular microphone to any particular loudspeaker can be controlled by either the talker or the listener associated with the channel.

In contrast, McGregor fails to either teach or suggest an interface with such a capability. The activation of any particular microphone in McGregor can only be controlled from a single switch. In the embodiment of Figure 2 of McGregor, switching unit 12 is within reach of the driver (col. 3, lines 29-40). Only one on/off switch is described in

connection with switching unit 12 and it appears that the two channels can only be both on or both off simultaneously. In the embodiment of Figures 4-6 in McGregor, separate switches are provided for the driver and the passenger but each switch still only controls the activation of one particular microphone to loudspeaker connection. There are no single connections that can be controlled from both locations. So in contrast to the system of claims 1 and 11, the activation of a microphone in McGregor can only be controlled at the specific location of the microphone. Romesburg (which is only cited for showing echo cancellation) lacks any disclosure of multiple controls. In view of this significant difference in structure and function between the claims and the cited combination, claims 1 and 11 and their dependent claims 2-5 and 12 are allowable over the cited references.

The rejection of claims 6 and 13 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over McGregor as modified by Romesburg and further in view of Monopoli is respectfully traversed. The three-way switch of Monopoli fails to strengthen the rejection since there is no teaching or suggestion in Monopoli to control a connection between a microphone and a loudspeaker from more than one location. Therefore, claims 6 and 13 are allowable over the cited references.

The rejection of claims 7, 8, 14, and 15 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over McGregor as modified by Romesburg and further in view of Iwai is respectfully traversed. Iwai does not correct for the deficiencies noted above in McGregor and Romesburg. Therefore, claims 7, 8, 14, and 15 are allowable for the same reasons as discussed above regarding claims 1 and 11.

The rejection of claims 9, 10, 16, and 17 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over McGregor as modified by Romesburg and further in view of Roddy is respectfully traversed. Roddy does not correct for the deficiencies noted above in McGregor and Romesburg. Therefore, claims 9, 10, 16, and 17 are allowable for the same reasons as discussed above regarding claims 1 and 11.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, claims 1-17 are now in condition for allowance. Favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: September 9, 2005
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